



NAKAYOSHI GAKKO
FRIENDSHIP SCHOOL

Summer 2026

Family Orientation Handbook

Located at Mountain View Buddhist Temple
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DISCLAIMER

The policies listed in this handbook are by no means exhaustive. Not every situation is included or addressed. Nakayoshi Gakko reserves the right to update or vary the application of rules and policies as it sees fit. This handbook is intended as a guide to help students, parents and volunteers, both adults and minors, to work together to ensure a comfortable and safe space for learning. The parents must ensure that they share the rules and consequences with their students and make sure that such students understand the behavior expectations.

WELCOME TO NAKAYOSHI GAKKO

Welcome to the 27th year of Nakayoshi Gakko. As we are in the middle of our third decade, we thank the many people who helped make Nakayoshi Gakko an enormous success. We are grateful for the continued support of the Mountain View Buddhist Temple and encouragement from our families and friends.

This year's superb staff of teachers, together with an energetic group of senpai volunteers, is looking forward to leading a variety of lessons and introducing your children to the many different aspects of Japanese and Japanese-American culture.

With your help, we know Nakayoshi Gakko will continue to be a wonderful experience for your children.

HISTORY OF NAKAYOSHI GAKKO

The vision of starting a Japanese Cultural Summer School program at the Mountain View Buddhist Temple was initiated by parents who wanted to pass from generation to generation the elements of their own Japanese culture. Armed with their vision, Temple parent Kathy Fujii presented the concept to the Temple board. She received overwhelming support and great enthusiasm from the Temple board and from participating parents.

In September 1999, a small volunteer board was organized and composed of Phyllis Chan, Pat Tomosada, Charlene Temple, Debby Inenaga, Becky Hudson and Kathy Fujii. Staff recruitment began with the hiring of an experienced Curriculum Director: Kit Nishiura, a former teacher and director at Medaka no Gakko. By January 2000, teachers and coordinators were hired. Both board and staff had the objective of putting on an exceptional program in an effort to make the children, the parents and the community happy and proud. In June 2000, Nakayoshi Gakko opened its doors to 76 students.

CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

Nakayoshi Gakko offers a full and rich curriculum. After considerable research, we adopted a three-point mission statement, provided below:

Mission Statement

- To promote an awareness of Japanese culture in its historical and religious context.
- To gain an appreciation of Japanese-American heritage.
- To encourage friendship and cultivate those values that characterize the Japanese way of life.

The following objectives serve as guidelines to achieve the Mission Statement goals. With the help of experienced, credentialed classroom teachers, students will:

- Learn about different aspects of Japanese culture through various hands-on projects.
- Gain an understanding of Japanese-American heritage by participating in enrichment activities and field trips.
- Analyze and interpret Japanese and Japanese-American culture and history through literature and student-produced written and oral assignments.
- Demonstrate their appreciation of Japanese culture and values in school activities, such as Japanese language instruction, undokai (physical education), music, art, and cooking classes.
- Develop awareness that these values have importance in how we live and relate to others.
- Provide opportunities to develop a wider circle of friends from surrounding communities.

CURRICULUM OUTLINE

Class	Social Studies	Values	Holidays/Events	Cultural Topics and Terms
Panda	Family	"Me" in my family	(New Year's Day)	Roles of family members (<i>chichi, haha, watashi, boku</i>), Family identity (family crest)
		Pride in tradition	Girls' Day Boys' Day	Kimono for boys and girls <i>Ayatori, menko</i> , and other traditional toys
		Respect to the elders	Respect for the Aged Day	Bowing and other forms of showing respect to the elders
Saru	Community (1): Awareness and Responsibility	Notion of <i>Mottainai</i> (appreciation of what we are given)	(Needle Festival)	Reusable items (<i>furoshiki, kimono</i>) Reuse of paper Japanese traditional paper (<i>origami, chiyogami, washi</i>)
		Harmony: Awareness & responsibility as a group	Nikkei Matsuri	House (<i>shoji, fusuma, tatami, noren</i>) <i>Matsuri</i> (<i>den den drums, hachimaki, ancestors</i>)
Kuma	Community (2): Connection to the Universe	Nature as gods	Star/Moon Festivals	Summer card & gift giving Calligraphy (<i>fude, sumi</i>) <i>Tanabata (orihime, hikoboshi)</i> Japanese mythology
		Mental/physical cleanliness	(New Year's Eve)	Cleansing of house & self (water and salt), sumo, <i>Shinto</i>
Zou	Oceans & Nations	Ocean and Japanese Lifestyle	New Year's Day	" <i>Umi no Sachi</i> " (food from the ocean, <i>gyotaku</i> , sushi) New Year's celebration
		Weather & Life	Obon Relocation War Memorial Day	Weather and kanji characters, <i>teruterubozu</i>
		China and Japan		Tradition from China (<i>kanji, tango-no-sekku, tanabata</i>)
Kirin	Learn from our past	Perseverance	Relocation	Relocation (<i>Issei, Nisei</i>)
		Respect to ancestors	Obon	Items from Buddhism (Buddha, <i>Daruma</i>)
		Peace of two countries	War Memorial Day	A-bomb and prayer for peace (paper cranes)

<i>Class</i>	<i>Social Studies</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Holidays/Events</i>	<i>Cultural Topics and Terms</i>
Tora	Nature and seasonal symbols	Appreciation of four seasons	Excursions to enjoy cherry blossoms, maple leaves, and snow	Natural beauty in the house (garden, <i>tokonoma</i> , table setting) <i>Haiku</i>
	Heritage of Japanese aesthetic value	<i>Ma</i> (balanced space) and <i>Sabi</i> (elegant simplicity)	(Hakone Matsuri)	Japanese visual art, <i>haiku</i> , tea ceremony
	Identity as "Nikkei-jin"	Pride of being a Japanese American	(Nikkei Matsuri)	How we enjoy our annual events and how people in Japan enjoy their annual events (review: months and seasons)
Ryu	Tokugawa			<i>Bunraku</i> <i>Kamishibai</i>
Tsuru	Migration Immigration			<i>Kabuki</i>

SCHOOL POLICIES

Enrollment Requirements

- **Eligibility**

Students entering first through eighth grade in September of the upcoming school year are eligible to participate in Nakayoshi Gakko.

- **Tuition**

At the time of registration, tuition is paid in full with the application. A 25% late fee is assessed on all late payments. **All accounts must be settled by the first day of the session.**

- **Refunds**

Payment is fully refundable, minus a \$50 processing fee, until April 15, 2026. No refunds will be given for cancellations made after that date.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Illness

- If your child is ill, please do not send him/her to school. We ask each family's support and cooperation in this matter.
- We will send your child home for the following reasons: fever, injury, nausea, or suspected contagious conditions.
 - Children who are ill should remain at home until they have been fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication, and other symptoms are mild and improving.
- For more information, refer to the CDC Respiratory Illness and Santa Clara County Public Health Respiratory Virus guidelines
 - [CDC Respiratory Virus Guidance](#)
 - [Santa Clara County Public Health - Preventing Spread of Respiratory Viruses](#)

If a Student is a Close Contact for a Respiratory Virus

- Please monitor for symptoms
- Consider testing for respiratory viruses and wear a mask indoors for 5 days after the last exposure.

Allergies

All allergies should be listed on the health form and must be brought to the attention of the classroom teacher and school personnel.

Emergency Medications

If your child carries an Epi-Pen, Benadryl, or any other medications, please inform the Office Staff, Classroom Teacher, and Senpai. A box will be provided in the office for medications and emergency instructions (ex. if you want medication dispensed or 911 to be called). Please place these in a clearly labeled Ziploc bag. Medications will be returned at the end of session.

Medical Emergencies

In the event your child has a medical emergency, the school makes every effort to contact the parents or guardians listed on the registration forms first. If parents or guardians cannot be reached, the school will contact the doctor listed on the medical release form.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of an emergency PLEASE DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL. It is imperative we keep our telephone lines open for emergency purposes.

Nakayoshi Gakko is prepared for emergencies and we maintain supplies of food, water, and first aid equipment should students need to remain at school for a substantial period of time. Nakayoshi Gakko has established emergency procedures to ensure the safety of all our students. Fire and earthquake drills are held on the first day of the session.

1. In the event of an earthquake, all children will be kept at school until picked up by a family member or a designated person.
2. For any other reasons, you will be contacted via phone using the number that is listed on the Emergency Form.
3. No student will be dismissed from school unless a parent (or individual designated in writing by parent) comes for him/her. Please ensure that the proper contact information is listed on the emergency contact form (jackrabbit.com).
4. All parents or designated persons who come for students must sign out at the temple gym or at the temporary student release station. Signs will be posted if this alternate location is required.

In the event of an earthquake, prolonged power outage, fire, etc., where it is necessary to close the school before regularly scheduled closing, we expect parents to pick up their children as soon as possible.

If you are not able to reach the school in an emergency, Nakayoshi Gakko will care for your children until you arrive or the person designated by you in writing arrives.

PARENT VOLUNTEER COMMITMENTS

As a parent cooperative, Nakayoshi Gakko relies heavily on parent volunteers to support various school programs and curriculum. Parent participation is critical to the integrity of the program and well-being of the children.

1. Maintenance Day 1, 2

- All families are required to participate
- Sign-ups are sent out via email
- Volunteers will be assigned a duty.
- Focus on clean-up & set-up of the classrooms & grounds.
- Maintenance Day 1: Saturday, June 13 (9 a.m. - 12 p.m.)
- Maintenance Day 2: Saturday, June 27 (9 a.m. - 12 p.m.)

2. Parent Work Day

- Daily Classroom Support (12:00pm - 3:30pm)
 - Support Senpai and Specialty teachers
 - Be fully engaged!

3. Committee Assignments

- Arts & Crafts
 - Prepare materials for classroom projects
- Publications
 - Print/copy materials (workbooks, name tags, certificates)
 - Picture Day photos
 - Publish Mid-session digital newsletter
 - Produce photo slideshow and Open House video
- Open House Committee
 - Set up and Post Event Clean-up (Friday, June 26)
- Mochitsuki
 - Prepare, Set up and Post Event Clean-up (Friday, June 19)

4. MVBT OBON (Bingo Booth)

- July 18th & 19th, 2026
- Set up, Caller, Announcer, Table Runners, Prize Runners
- Sign-up sheet will go out during Nakayoshi Gakko session

PARENT/FAMILY EVENTS

Dine with Nakayoshi Gakko

Dine at designated restaurants on specified days and Nakayoshi Gakko receives a percentage of sales from Nakayoshi Gakko customers. This year, we are dining out with **Ike's Love and Sandwiches** (Saturday June 13 at all San Jose locations, Santa Clara, Cupertino, Sunnyvale, Mountain View and Palo Alto), **Empire Armadillo BBQ & Deli** (Wednesday June 17 from 4 PM - 7:30 PM, 161 E. El Camino Real, Sunnyvale) and **BJ's Brewhouse** (Thursday June 25 from 3:30 PM - 10 PM, 10690 N. De Anza Boulevard, Cupertino).

Mochitsuki

Mochitsuki is a traditional Japanese New Year's custom of pounding steamed rice into mochi, a sticky rice cake. It will be held on Friday, June 19 from 3:00pm-4:30pm.

Open House

Open House will be on the last day of camp! It will showcase all the crafts and activities your student has participated in during the 2 weeks of camp. Friday, June 26 from 3:30pm-5:00pm.

Other Fundraisers

- We accept donations and corporate matching.
- Need name labels to label all your child's school, camp, sports stuff? Order through Label Daddy. www.labeldaddy.com/nakayoshi

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Camp is from Monday - Friday 8:30am - 3:30pm, June 15 - 26, 2026

Drop Off: 8:15am - 8:30am **Pick Up:** 3:30pm - 3:45pm

Arrival:

- Park in the parking lot and walk your student inside the gym lobby.
- Sign-in and have your student put on their name badge.
- Students need to place their lunch bag and snack bag in the appropriate box, labeled by class.
- Walk students to the classroom to put water bottles and bags away.
- Senpais will be waiting in the classrooms until it is time for Taiso. Parents are welcome to watch Taiso in the gym.

Pick-Up:

- Line up outside of the classroom.
- Sign your student out and return the name badge.
- Pick up snack and lunch containers in the lobby.



LUNCH AND SNACK

Each student should bring a snack and lunch **free of nuts**. Lunch bags will be kept in the walk-in refrigerator. No microwave is available to reheat food, so please plan accordingly. Lunch and snacks should not be shared between students due to allergies.

Please bring refillable water bottles. Water stations will be available to refill the bottles.

DAILY SCHEDULE

8:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.	Taiso
8:45 a.m.	Classes Begin
Snack Periods	Staggered (1st - 6th)
Lunch	Staggered (1st - 8th)
1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.	Specialty Classes
3:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	Clean Up
3:30 p.m. - 3:45 p.m.	Dismissal

LATE DROP-OFF AND EARLY PICK-UP

LATE DROP OFF

- Bring your student to the office

EARLY PICK-UP

- Parent/Authorized adults check-in at the office to sign student out
- One of the office staff will escort you to the classroom to pick up your student

INSURANCE

Nakayoshi Gakko does not carry medical insurance.

Liability

1. Children not officially enrolled in the program are not allowed on the school grounds.
2. No person shall be personally liable for debts of Nakayoshi Gakko solely because of association with the school.
3. All participating students are required to have a signed photography release and parental consent waiver on file.

NON-DISCRIMINATION & ANTI-HARASSMENT POLICY

Nakayoshi Gakko is committed to providing learning and volunteering environments in which all students and volunteers, both adult and minor, involved in school programs and activities can participate in an atmosphere free from all forms of harassment and discrimination. All students and volunteers have the right to learn and teach in an environment free of unlawful discrimination and harassment. Harassment or discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, military and veteran status, religion, disability, medical condition, age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, domestic partnership status, pregnancy, or sexual orientation is prohibited.

Prohibited harassment or discrimination includes, by way of example, slurs, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual, harassing or discriminatory nature: unwelcome sexual advances or reference to sexual themes which are deemed offensive, or other discriminatory or harassing verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct based on the recipient's race, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, veteran's status, religion, disability, age, gender or sexual orientation.

Any participant at Nakayoshi Gakko (students, volunteers, both adult and minor) who engages in the harassment or discrimination of anyone at school programs or activities shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the program and possible police arrest if such action is criminal in nature.

Anyone affected by harassment or discrimination should immediately contact staff if they feel they are being harassed. Within 24 hours, staff shall report complaints to the Principal or Designee. Staff shall similarly report any such incidents they may observe, even if the affected person has not complained. The Principal and the President of the Nakayoshi Gakko Board of Directors will investigate reports of harassment. Upon verifying that harassment has occurred, they will ensure that appropriate action is promptly taken to end the harassment, address its effects on the affected person, and prevent any further instances of harassment.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

The Nakayoshi Gakko Code of Conduct supports our effort to maintain a safe and supportive school environment. Each student is expected to behave appropriately in all activities and accept responsibility for his/her actions. Parents and staff share responsibility for supporting the school's objectives and working together to correct problems when they arise.

School Rules

At Nakayoshi Gakko, students are expected to:

1. Treat Sensei, Principal, parents/adults and each other with respect and courtesy.
2. Get Sensei, Principal or parent/adult permission before leaving the class or group.
3. Use appropriate language and gestures.
4. Refrain from physical and verbal aggression.
5. Refrain from using cell phones and other electronic devices during school hours.

The behavior expectation code at camp is that students will:

1. Follow the rules of camp.
2. Cooperate with other students and staff.
3. Listen and follow instructions.
4. Participate in all activities.

Nakayoshi Gakko senseis and senpais and staff will provide leadership, guidance and assistance to all students in meeting their behavior expectations. Students who choose to behave in a socially appropriate manner will maximize the benefits they receive from the camping experience.

Student Expectations

Nakayoshi Gakko will take place from June 15 - 26 (M-F) 8:30am - 3:30pm. All camp activities will be in person.

Examples of Misbehavior

The Nakayoshi Gakko Summer Camp sensei and senpai understand that students may misbehave and that most of those misbehaviors will be minor or inconsequential. Sometimes a student's misbehavior may be serious enough to warrant the sensei, senpai or principal intervention. The following are some examples of serious misbehavior at camp:

1. Social misbehavior

- a. Refusing to follow instructions, directions or safety rules.
- b. Bullying other students.
- c. Harassing other students by teasing or name-calling.

2. Group misbehavior

- a. Refusing to follow instructions, directions or safety rules.
- b. Disrupting the program process.
- c. Refusing to participate in program activities.
- d. Harassing other campers through misbehavior

Disciplinary Action

- Students violating the student's code of conduct or the Sensei's classroom rules may result in being sent to the office to have a conversation with the Principal.
- Further disruptions from students may result in a CLASS SUSPENSION where the Student is removed from camp for the rest of the day.
- EXPULSION – This form of suspension is assigned only by an administrator and the President of the Nakayoshi Gakko Board of Directors. An expulsion is a complete exclusion and removal from Nakayoshi Gakko and all Nakayoshi programs from the remainder of the current session. Return of the student in future years will be reviewed on an individual basis. No fees will be refunded for expelled students.

PHOTOGRAPHY RELEASE

As parent/guardian of a child or children (hereinafter "Child"), parents acknowledge that audio/video recordings may be made and/or photographs may be taken of Child during participation in demonstrations, field trips, games, contests, and classes and other activities set forth in the Nakayoshi Gakko descriptive materials ("Activities") offered during the Nakayoshi Gakko Summer 2026 session ("Summer Session"). "Photographs" shall mean a picture or likeness obtained by photographic reproduction, still or moving, using either traditional film media or digital recording or storage media, and further including any video tape or live television transmission. Photographs may be taken of parents or Child either alone or with other persons in any setting.

Parents have given authorization and consent (signed during registration) to Nakayoshi Gakko, its Board, officers, agents, volunteers, employees, successors, and assignees (hereinafter "Recipient") to reproduce, perform, publish, create derivatives, and distribute (by whatever means including but not limited to, using newspapers or discrete media such as CDs and DVDs, through the internet, through any other electronic medium presently in existence or invented in the future), of parents and/or Child's voice, photograph or likeness (hereinafter collectively the "Property"), for any purposes, including but not limited to the public promoting of, the public advertising of, describing the mission, class offerings, demonstrations, or other programs and activities of Nakayoshi Gakko in a public forum only after providing written consent to the Recipient. **All public usage of the Property must be formally requested in writing prior to usage by the Recipient.**

Through the registration of Nakayoshi Gakko, parents release and forever discharge Recipient from any and all claims, demands, actions, causes of actions, suits, costs, expenses, liabilities, and damages arising from Recipient's reproduction, performance, publication, creation of derivatives, and distribution of the authorized use of the Property.

Parents further hereby agree not to bring or consent to others bringing claim or action against Recipient on the grounds that anything contained in the authorized Property, or in the advertising and publicity used in connection herewith, is defamatory, reflects adversely on me, violates any other right whatsoever, including, without limitation, rights of privacy and publicity.

CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Principal - Joanne Endo

I have been a teacher in San Jose for nineteen years, and I am currently at Country Lane Elementary School. I especially enjoy science, writing, and art. During my free time, I like to do crafts, play the guitar, and visit Disneyland. This will be my 18th year at Nakayoshi Gakko.

Panda Sensei – Annette Lowe

My name is Annette Lowe. I am currently a Kindergarten teacher at Sedgwick Elementary School in Cupertino. I live in San Jose with my husband and our two wonderful children. I have been teaching the Panda class for over 20 years and love it!

Saru Sensei - Marilyn Higa-Armistead

My name is Marilyn Higa-Armistead. This will be my 12th year teaching the Saru class and I look forward to meeting the new incoming class. I was born and raised in Mountain View and our family has been active in the Mountain View Buddhist Temple since 1973! I graduated from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and got my teaching credential and Masters degree from San Jose State University. I taught 1st grade at Laurelwood Elementary in San Jose before finally finding a 3rd grade position which I loved at Huff Elementary School (now Imai Elementary) in Mountain View. I've retired from teaching full time and during my free time I enjoy watching and playing sports with my husband and two children, crafts, gardening, playing cards, fishing, camping and hanging out with family and friends.

Saru Sensei - Jaimie Nishimoto

My name is Jaimie Nishimoto, and I am excited to begin my fourth year teaching at Nakayoshi Gakko! Nakayoshi Gakko has been a big part of my life for many years. I first attended as a student from Panda class until Tsuru class and later returned as a Senpai for many summers before becoming a teacher.

I earned my Bachelor's degree in Liberal Studies from San Francisco State University and later received my teaching credential from Teachers College of San Joaquin. Currently, I teach 4th grade at Stevenson Elementary School in the Mountain View School District. During my free

time I like to watch sports, build lego sets, hangout with family and friends as well as spend time with my two corgis, Milo and Cooper.

I am so excited to meet the incoming Saru class!

Kuma Sensei – Jeanifer Tsukamoto

My name is Jeanifer Tsukamoto. I have been teaching in the Cupertino Union School District for over 26 years. Fun fact, I was one of the first teachers that taught at Nakayoshi Gakko. Also, I grew up going to Japanese school in the same classrooms that Nakayoshi Gakko uses today. Most of my spare moments are spent with my husband and daughter going to her extracurricular activities. However, when I do have some time, I enjoy reading, traveling, and doing yoga. I look forward to teaching the Kuma class this summer.

Zou Sensei – Kelly Kusumi

Hi there, my name is Kelly Kusumi. I taught fourth grade last year and TK this year at Orchard Elementary. I earned both my bachelor's degree in Child and Adolescent Development and my master's degree in Education/Curriculum and Instruction from San Jose State University. This is my second year as a sensei at Nakayoshi Gakko, and I am excited to continue being part of this wonderful program. Some fun facts about me are that my favorite animals are pink bunnies and anglerfish, and I love listening to audiobooks.

Kirin Sensei – Satomi Fujikawa

Satomi Fujikawa grew up in Oakland and has been teaching in San Jose since 2007. Currently, she is a middle school teacher in the Moreland School District. She loves teaching the Kirin class because she has always been interested in the Japanese American experience during World War II and wants to help pass on their stories to the next generation. When she's not teaching, she is often picking up new hobbies—her current favorites are birding, sewing, and watercoloring. She also enjoys visiting National Parks and volunteers at Yosemite National Park for a whole month during summer vacation!

Tora Sensei – Debra Hashimoto

I am so excited to be back at Nakayoshi Gakko! I previously taught the Zou class for two years. I am currently a first-grade teacher in Fremont and have been teaching for 20 years. I love this program and believe it offers an invaluable experience and a wonderful opportunity for children to learn about Japanese culture. I look forward to working with your children this summer!

Ryu Sensei - Jennifer Davis

Jennifer received her Bachelor's of Arts degree in English at UC Irvine; she also earned a multiple subject teaching credential and Master's degree in Cross Cultural Teaching and Learning from National University. She is currently finishing up her 19th year teaching elementary school in The Cupertino Union School District. She is a lifelong learner and enjoys new experiences. Nakayoshi Gakko is a new opportunity that she is looking forward to! She is half Japanese, and she's excited to explore more about her cultural roots. In her spare time, you will find her hiking, camping, traveling, or playing her guitar or ukulele.

Tsuru Sensei – Toshimi Fujikawa

Toshimi is happy to return to Nakayoshi Gakko this year as the Tsuru Sensei again. After receiving her teaching credential and Master's from Cal State East Bay, Toshimi has been a high school Earth Science teacher for 9 years, currently teaching in Pleasanton Unified School District and formerly in San Lorenzo Unified School District.

Language (Lower) Sensei – Yoko Kobashi

Tadaima! My name is Yoko Kobashi, and I'm delighted to return to the Nakayoshi Gakko community.

My last name, Kobashi (小橋), means “small bridge”. When I got married, I wasn't thrilled about it. After all, there are Takahashi (高橋), meaning “tall bridge”, Ohashi (大橋), meaning “big bridge”, and Nakahashi (中橋), meaning “middle/medium bridge”. Being assigned a small bridge felt a little disappointing! Over the years, however, I've realized it suits me perfectly. I may be small in stature, and the things I do may seem small, but I enjoy being a bridge connecting students to Japanese language, culture, and traditions.

By the way, my first name, Yoko (陽子), means "child of the sun," so perhaps I'm a small bridge with a little sunshine built in. If you'd like to know my maiden name, come find me - you'll understand why I was tempted to keep it. During the session, you'll often see me hopping from classroom to classroom.

I look forward to another fun year of learning together. Dozo yoroshiku onegaishimasu!

Language (Upper) Sensei – Lisa Nakamatsu

Although Lisa Nakamatsu was born and raised in the South Bay, she lived in Japan for ten years. Her husband is from Okinawa and both of her daughters were born in Japan. After returning to the States, she earned a degree in Japanese from SFSU followed by her teaching credential. She has taught Japanese at Homestead High since 2004. Lisa loves to travel and has been to 21 different countries (including Cuba).

Lower Cooking Sensei (Panda through Tora) - Cathy Nakamura

I worked as a nutritionist and registered dietitian for the USDA Food and Nutrition Service in San Francisco for 6 years. I retired from Monta Vista High as a Special Ed secretary and paraeducator. This is my 24th year at Nakayoshi Gakko.

Upper Cooking Sensei - Irene Nishimoto

Irene has been a former registered dietitian and is now a retired elementary school teacher. Irene received her Bachelor of Arts degree in home economics with a dietetics emphasis from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, and later her teaching credentials at San Jose State. After working as a registered dietitian for 17 years, she taught at Country Lane Elementary School for 22 years. When her children were younger, she was a board member of Medaka no Gakko in Palo Alto and taught a combo 4th, 5th, and 6th grade class for one year. This is her 14th year teaching cooking for the 7th and 8th grade classes at Nakayoshi Gakko. She is looking forward to joining the staff again.

Music Sensei – Cheryl Shay

My name is Cheryl Shay. I grew up in Sunnyvale and have attended the Mountain View Buddhist Temple since childhood. I currently live in San Jose and enjoy traveling and playing the piano for MVBT.

Odori Sensei – Ann Chavez

I am so excited to be a part of the Nakayoshi Gakko community. Both of my children thoroughly enjoyed being students in the program and are back this summer as senpai. I have been teaching for over 20 years in the field of Deaf Education for preschool through middle school aged students. I look forward to seeing everyone this June!

Origami Sensei - Jake Aquino

I am going into my fourth year at Cal State Long Beach. I went through the entire Nakayoshi program from Panda to Tsuru and was also a senpai during high school. I am excited to return for my third year of teaching origami at Nakayoshi.

Soroban and Taiko Sensei - Joy Tanaka

Joy Tanaka began studying soroban (Japanese abacus) at age 10 in Honolulu, Hawaii. She continued advancing through high school and college, eventually becoming a chief instructor at the Araki Hiroya Soroban School. Joy was also a performing member of the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble and served as director of the Taiko Center of the Pacific Youth Group in Honolulu before moving to the Bay Area. She is currently a member of Jun Daiko and an instructor for the Mountain View Buddhist Temple Taiko group.

Sumi-e Sensei - Tami Shidawara

Hi I am Tami Shidawara, a Los Altos based artist and teacher. I work mostly in acrylic paints but also charcoal drawings. I enjoy doing commissioned pet portraits and furniture painting. I have enjoyed teaching sumi-e painting and am excited to come back and teach another summer session.

Undokai Sensei - Bradley Aquino

My name is Bradley Aquino, and I am going into my 2nd year at Cal State Long Beach. I am both very grateful and excited to be able to return to Nakayoshi as a sensei after previously participating as both a camper and senpai. I am looking forward to this year's session!

SENPAI (In their own words...)

Rebecca Kunze, Head Senpai

Hi! I'm Rebecca and I graduated from Notre Dame High School this past May. In my free time, I do track and field / cross country, Girl Scouts, and I love to hang out with friends and explore hikes around the area. I also play taiko with MVBT and San Jose Taiko! I love coming back to Nakayoshi Gakko every year and am excited to spend one last summer connecting with all the students!

Addison (Addy) Ando, Assistant Head Senpai

Hi, my name is Addison Ando, but I go by Addy, and I am going to be a senior at Leigh High School. A little about me is that I am an active member of both YBA (Youth Buddhist Association) and Girl Scouts, where I serve as an Activities Co-Chair and Vice President. I have also served as Secretary for my school's JACC (Japanese American Cultural Club). Through these leadership roles, I have learned how to stay organized, be responsible, and communicate effectively with my peers. As a Senpai, I aim to be a positive role model who leads with responsibility, encouragement, and support.

Kate Hojo, Panda (1st grade) Senpai

Hi, my name is Kate Hojo and I just finished my junior year at Carlmont High School and I am a member of both the competition and sideline cheer teams. I attend Mountain View Buddhist Temple with my family and I am also a member of YBA. I enjoy spending time with friends and traveling. I attended Nakayoshi Gakko from Panda through Tsuru and this is my third year as a Senpai.

Sara Chavez, Panda (1st grade) Senpai

Hi! My name is Sara Chavez and I am entering senior year at Notre Dame High School (SJ). I have worked as a senpai for the past two years with the Kuma and Panda classes. In high school, I am involved in tennis, technical theater, and mock trial. I am extremely excited to have the opportunity to work with this program once more to provide an enjoyable experience for all students.

Kimiko (Kimi) Aquino, Saru (2nd grade) Senpai

I am Kimi Aquino, a current sophomore at Mountain View High school. This is my second year as a Nakayoshi Gakko senpai after 8 years of attending as a camper. I enjoy helping out around the camp and I love getting to know all the campers. I am really looking forward to another fun session this summer.

Kylie Uyekubo, Saru (2nd grade) Senpai

Hi, my name is Kylie Uyekubo! I just graduated from Aragon High School and am looking forward to studying speech language pathology in the fall. In my free time I enjoy playing basketball, baking, and hanging out with my friends. I love Nakayoshi and have been a part of this camp since I was in kindergarten. Since then I have made so many life long friendships and wonderful memories through this program.

Kylie Higa, Kuma (3rd grade) Senpai

When I was a Nakayoshi student, the senpais helped teach me many skills such as safe cooking, socialization, and understanding the culture, which is why I am excited to be a senpai as well. I'm passionate about working with students and having a supportive environment where students can have fun while learning. I love Nakayoshi Gakko because it gives me the experience to become a teacher when I'm older. I enjoy doing crafts, helping in my community and spending time with my family and friends.

Lex Maag, Kuma (3rd grade) Senpai

My name is Lex! I'm a 17 year old incoming senior at Design Tech HS, and I'm looking forward to my 3rd year as a senpai at Nakayoshi Gakko. This camp is a big part of my youth, and I'm hoping to help provide more good experiences for more kids to come. Overall, I'm looking forward to being a part of this community!

Jordyn Matsushima, Zou (4th grade) Senpai

My name is Jordyn Matsushima, and I am a junior at Piedmont Hills High School. I've completed Nakayoshi panda through tsuru years starting at first grade! At school I play basketball and I'm a varsity starter, and I like to play outside of school as well. On the side I also do girl scouts which I've also been doing since kindergarten. Nakayoshi is the thing I look forward to the most in summer as it's such a fun community and very well run for kids to enjoy.

Kaitlyn Yee, Zou (4th grade) Senpai

Hi! I'm Kaitlyn, and I just graduated from Leigh High School. I love going to the gym, spending time with my family & friends, being in the sun, and getting matcha and yummy food!!! I have been a part of the Nakayoshi Gakko program since Panda class, and this is my fourth year as a Senpai. I can't wait to have a fun and memorable last year as Senpai with my friends!!!

Emi Hirabayashi, Kirin (5th grade) Senpai

Hello! My name is Emi Hirabayashi, and I just graduated from Homestead High School. Some of my favorite activities include baking with my friends, singing in choir, and playing basketball. Getting to be a Senpai is one of the highlights of my summer, and I am excited to make the most of it. I have attended Nakayoshi Gakko since I was a panda, and although this is my last year, I am excited to make more fun memories! I always enjoy getting to know the students, and I hope that I can help them have as much fun as I did when I was a student at Nakayoshi.

Julian LeConte, Kirin (5th grade) Senpai

My name is Julian LeConte and I am a Junior at Leigh High School. In my free time I enjoy photography, flying FPV drones, and baseball. When I take photos I explore new places with friends, going on long hikes to find awesome views. I like new challenges whether it's problem solving or having friendly competitions.

Madisen Nishimoto, Tora (6th grade) Senpai

Hi, I'm Madisen Nishimoto. I am currently attending Leigh High School and will be a senior in the 2026-2027 school year. During my free time I enjoy reading and going on walks with my dog. I am also on the color guard team at Leigh and have been participating in the sport since I was in 8th grade.

Tyler Uyekubo, Tora (6th grade) Senpai

Hello my name is Tyler. I will be a sophomore at Aragon in the fall. I enjoy playing basketball and baseball in my free time. I'm excited to be a senpai as I look up to the senpai during my time at Nakayoshi Gakko.

Devin Lowe, Ryu (7th grade) Senpai

My name is Devin Lowe, and I am an upcoming senior at Cupertino High School. I have participated in Nakayoshi since panda, and helped out as a senpai last year. I enjoy playing volleyball with friends, but I also play on a club team and for my school varsity team. Alongside sports, I'm in my school's Acapella choir as well. I really like hanging out with friends, working with others, and trying new things.

Mari Mizota, Ryu (7th grade) Senpai

Hi! My name is Mari, and I just graduated from Mission Early College High School. Participating in Nakayoshi Gakko has always been a highlight of my summer, both as a participant and as a senpai. In my free time, I enjoy playing soccer, crafting, and spending time with family and friends. This summer, I'm excited to meet new people, make new memories and be a part of the community!

Emilia Yamada, Tsuru (8th grade) Senpai

I'm a freshman at Mountain View High School. I've gone to Nakayoshi Gakko since Panda, but didn't go all four years because of COVID. Basketball is one of my many passions that I play frequently with many different kinds of people. This has taught me how to be a leader and helped me develop my communication skills. I continue my passion by helping coach at Tri-City with my twin sister. I still love doing childhood hobbies like art, crocheting, and collecting stuffed animals.

Zoe Tang, Tsuru (8th grade) Senpai

My name is Zoe and I am a senior of class '26 at Branham Highschool. In my free time I love to bake for friends and family and grab specialty drinks like matcha and boba. I also love playing basketball, golfing, making art and hanging out with friends. I've attended Nakayoshi Gakko every year since I was a panda and I always look forward to returning as Senpai.

Madeleine Kondo, Lower Cooking Senpai

Hi, my name is Madeleine Kondo and I will be a sophomore at Carmont High School this fall. I've attended Nakayoshi Gakko as a camper from Panda to Tsuru and have been looking forward to my first year as a senpai. At school I'm part of the choir and the Carmont Technical Theaters Association. I'm involved in both Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts and am excited to be a part of this community.

Sophia Eng, Lower Cooking Senpai

Hi, I'm Sophia Eng and I'm a rising sophomore at Branham High School. I grew up attending Nakayoshi Gakko, from Panda all the way until Tsuru, and am very excited to be returning as a senpai. I love reading, playing basketball, spending time with kids, and hanging out with my friends in my free time.

Deanna Yamada, Upper Cooking Senpai

I go to Mountain View High School and really enjoy playing basketball. I love dogs, specifically rescues because they always have a personality. I also tend to find interest in sports medicine which is something I think I might want to pursue as a career in the future. I'm competitive not just with athletics, but also in academics because I have a twin sister. This has led to work hard and face conflicts head on.

Kosuke Tanaka, Upper Cooking Senpai

My name is Kosuke Tanaka, and I am going to be a sophomore in the fall at Fremont High School. I have been a part of Nakayoshi Gakko since Panda year, and am a member of the MVBT Taiko youth group. I have played taiko since I was two years old, and am an extreme band nerd. My main concert instrument is bassoon, but I have also learned to play the tenor saxophone. I am a part of my school Marching Band and Winter Percussion, play baseball and basketball, and am an avid reader.

Benjamin Akimoto, Program Senpai

Hi, my name is Benjamin Akimoto and I have just completed my freshman year of high school at Cupertino High School. I have participated in the Nakayoshi Gakko program since I was in kindergarten. Also, I have played competitive ice hockey for 11 years. I am excited to share my enthusiasm for Nakayoshi Gakko with the younger students entering the program.

Logan Chavez, Program Senpai

My name is Logan Chavez and I am a Freshman at Bellarmine. I do track and cross country and I love to watch sports like baseball and hockey. I like Japanese and Mexican foods and I am very proud of my Japanese culture. In my free time I like to listen to music or watch TV.

Malia Nishimoto, Program Senpai

My name is Malia Nishimoto and I'm an incoming sophomore at Leigh High School. I participate in Girl Scouts and gymnastics, as well as a couple clubs at school. Through Girl Scouts, I've had the opportunity to take on leadership roles and work with younger girls, teaching me responsibility and patience. I attended Nakayoshi Gakko from Panda through Tsuru and I'm excited to be back this summer.

Presley Mineta, Program Senpai

My name is Presley Mineta, and I am currently a freshman at Sequoia High School. I have been playing soccer since I was ten years old. I played on my high school JV team and am currently a member of the MVLA soccer club. In addition to soccer, I work as a babysitter for many families in my area, caring for children ranging from 2 to 12 years old. Through babysitting, I have built strong, trusting relationships with both the children and their parents. Also, recently I've had the opportunity to work with students from my old K-8th school Clifford as a Junior Assistant Director for their musical Shrek. I love working with kids because I find it easy to connect with them and truly enjoy their joyful, energetic personalities.

Samantha (Sammi) Higa, Program Senpai

My name is Sammi Higa, and I just completed my freshman year at California High School. I attended Nakayoshi Gakko as a Panda, and now this is my first year as a senpai. Having participated as a student, I am excited to support the program, bring creative thinking, and include others in all activities. I want to build my skills in communication and leadership this upcoming summer. I look forward to having a fun and eventful 2 weeks with Nakayoshi Gakko!

2025-2026

BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND BOARD INFORMATION

An organizational chart along with job descriptions of the Executive Board, Working Board, and Committees are available at: <https://www.nakayoshigakko.org/html/contact.html>

Executive Board

Co-Presidents	Doug Doi Kim Tsuchida	president@nakayoshigakko.org
Principal	Joanne Endo	principal@nakayoshigakko.org
Registrars	Cindy Nakasuji Julie Doi	registrar@nakayoshigakko.org
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Special Events	Veronica Troung Boyd Stephanie Fujii	events@nakayoshigakko.org
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Webmaster	Barry Tao	webmaster@nakayoshigakko.org
Ex-officio	Julie Uyekubo	

HONORARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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